DOCUMENTS EXPEDITING PROJECT

83d Congress
1st Session

COMMITTEE PRINT NO. 11

REPORT

OF A

SPECIAL SUBCOMMITTEE ON INDIAN AFFAIRS

OF MEETING AT SHERIDAN, WYO.

HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

EIGHTY-THIRD CONGRESS

PURSUANT TO

H. Res. 89

JULY 18 AND 19, 1953

Printed for the use of the Committee on Interior and Insular Affairs

UNITED STATES
GOVERNMENT PRINTING OFFICE
37212 WASHINGTON : 1953

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REPORT OF A SPECIAL SUBCOMMITTEE ON INDIAN AFFAIRS, PURSUANT TO HOUSE RESOLUTION 89, OF MEETING AT SHERIDAN, WYO.

AUGUST 3, 1953.

Hon. A. L. MILLER,
Chairman, House Interior and Insular Affairs Committee,
House of Representatives, Washington, D. C.

DEAR MR. MILLER: Your committee, appointed by you to attend the meeting of the Plains Indians at Sheridan, Wyo., on July 18 and 19, and to conduct hearings at that time, submits the following report of its activities:

The committee arrived in Sheridan, Wyo., the evening of July 17, and on July 18 attended and participated in the awarding of the Freedoms Foundation George Washington Honor Medal to the town of Sheridan, Wyo., for its record in breaking down racial prejudice between whites and Indians.

In order to make this report more complete, and to give details of the purpose of Indians meeting in Sheridan, we would say that the occasion was the presentation of this public service medal to Sheridan, Wyo., and that the Indians from 21 tribes sent delegations to this meeting at their own expense. The tribes present are as follows:

Sioux from North Dakota and South Dakota.
Associated tribes (Mandans, Arickeras, Gros Ventre) from North Dakota.
Blackfeet, Browning, Mont.
Gros Ventre-Assiniboines, Fort Belnap, Mont.
Chippewa-Cree, Rocky Boy, Mont.
Flatheads, Dixon, Mont.
Kootenais, Nez Perces, Colville Reservation, Nespelem, Wash.
Nez Perces, Lapwai, Idaho.
Yakimas, Toppinish, Wash.
Bannocks and Shoshones, Fort Hall, Idaho.
Arapahoes and Shoshones, Riverton, Wyo.
Crows, Mont.
Cheyennes, Mont.
Southern Cheyennes, Geary, Okla.
Southern Arapahoes, Geary, Okla.
Kiowas (unofficial delegation), Anadarko, Okla.
Sioux, Fort Peck, Mont.

The Department of the Interior sent the Honorable Felix Wormser, Assistant Secretary, to represent them.

The committee conducted hearings and listened to the delegates and representatives of the different tribes and received resolutions and statements from them.

John Gates, representative of the Black Hills Council of American Indians filed his written statement on behalf of his tribe.

Edwin J. Reddoor appeared on behalf of the Black Hills Sioux Council of the Fort Peck Indian Reservation and presented his credentials, and submitted Resolution No. 46 of that tribe to the committee.

The committee also heard at this time a statement by Rufus Ricker, an Indian 83 years old.

Thomas J. Duran, secretary of the Arapahoe Tribal Council appeared on behalf of the Arapahoe and Shoshone Tribes of the Wind River Reservation, Fremont County, Wyo., and submitted a written statement.

Robert Yellowtail, chairman of the Crow Tribal Council spoke at length and submitted a statement for the record.

George Brave, a representative of the Rosebud Sioux Tribal Council filed his credentials and submitted a statement for the record.

Alex Saluskin, secretary of the Yakima Tribal Council of the Yakima Nation appeared and filed the resolution of the Confederated Tribes and Bands of the United Yakima Indian Nation covering certain legislation before the Congress.

Mr. Felix Wormser, representing the Department of the Interior, appeared and repeated his statement of policy which he had presented on Saturday, July 18, at the time of the presentation of the George Washington Honor Medal award.

Gene Fisher of the Cheyenne Tribe, Lame Deer, Mont., appeared and asked that Mr. George Smith, a Cherokee from Oklahoma and a graduate of the University of Tulsa, now teaching at the Birney Day School, Birney, Mont., read his statement for him.

Walter MacDonald, president of the Flathead Council, appeared and made a general statement, as did Plain Feather, an 84-year-old Crow Indian, and Hartford Bearclaw of the Crow Agency, Mont.

Jim Archdale, vice chairman of the Tribal Council, Assiniboines, Fort Peck, Mont., made a statement on behalf of his tribe.

A written statement was also filed with your committee on behalf of the Shoshone-Bannock Tribe, Fort Hall Agency, Fort Hall, Idaho.

It was the general consensus of the Indians represented at this meeting that they were not ready for release from Federal wardship at the present time, but that if given a reasonable period of time to make such preparation, they felt that release could be accomplished.

The Arapahoe and Shoshone Tribes of the Wind River Reservation were pretty much upset regarding the new decision of the Bureau of Indian Affairs to close the Indian hospital located on that reservation, feeling that they were being discriminated against and that it was a violation of the rights guaranteed them under treaty.

From the hearing, we feel that there has not been close enough cooperation between the Indians and Congress, and that no effective program has been entered into between the Bureau of Indian Affairs preparing these particular Indians to become self-sustaining and able to handle their own affairs. It is our feeling that some specific program should be initiated without delay and that the Bureau should work more completely with the Indians toward this end, and that the Indians should be given more power, authority and responsibility in the operation of their own affairs as requested by them, particularly in those departments whose cost they pay the whole or greater part of cost.

It is our feeling that a great deal of good resulted from this meeting and that the information submitted by the Indians will be of great help in the future actions of this committee.

Statements submitted by the above-mentioned tribal representatives are attached hereto.

(COMMITTEE NOTE.—The documents are on file with the Committee on Interior and Insular Affairs.)

Respectfully submitted.

WILLIAM HENRY HARRISON,
Chairman, Special Indian Investigating Subcommittee.
E. Y. BERRY.
WAYNE N. ASPINALL.
CLAIR ENGLE.

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